

City of Chino ❖ Hall of Fame

presented on May 21, 2003 honoring

Arthur William Wagner

Arthur William Wagner, born March 11, 1902 in Cleveland, was brought to San Bernardino as a small child and abandoned to an orphanage. There he stayed until Tom and Eliza Mayhew took him into their Rincon ranch home. Young Wagner went to the old Pioneer School and later attended classes in a structure where the Community Building now stands.

As a teenager he went to work for Libby McNeill & Libby Cannery. There he met his future wife, Mary Ruth Nash. They were married in 1923.

He was employed by Associated Telephone (later General Telephone) in 1922, working his way up during the next 40 years to supervisor of installation and maintenance operations. Part of his job was to go to local fires. At a dairy blaze in 1924, he was drafted into service as a volunteer fireman and so began a 32-year association with the Chino Fire Department.

From 1924 to 1956 he saw the fire company grow from one small truck and 24 volunteers to nine full-time paid firefighters and six engines. In 1932 he was appointed Chief. Three years later, he was also made Chief of the newly-formed Chino Rural Fire Protection District, located in the then 93 outlying square miles of Chino.

He initiated many improvements for the protection of residents, including training programs and a mapping and index system for fire hydrants and water sources that was adopted by other fire prevention agencies throughout the state. He was also instrumental in getting the city to adopt a fire prevention code.

He directed the department's Christmas season efforts: toy and bicycle repair, collection of food baskets, and placing holiday decorations over the city streets. He personally answered letters to Santa forwarded to him by the post office.

As Chief, he provided first-aid and communications for the annual Rancho Ride, organized a Boys' Fire Club in 1940, and three years later formed and trained a women's auxiliary when he lost so many volunteers to the military.

In 1925, noting that some youth had little to do, he organized the ATMOC (All True Men of Chino) Club, turning young energies to sports and camping trips. As adults, many of them joined the volunteer fire department, several became community leaders.

He was a president of Rotary, served on the Chino Planning Commission and as Civil Defense Chief after retirement. In 1946, he was the first recipient of the American Legion Outstanding Citizen Award. In 1953, Fire Station One on Central Avenue was dedicated to Chief Art Wagner.